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VULNERABILITY AND RESISTANCE TO ACCEPT THE EXPRESSIONS OF REMORSE AND APOLOGY IN THE 20TH CENTURY IN THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA

ABSTRACT

During the 20th century, Japanese politicians made several attempts to apologize to Koreans for incorporating their territory into Japan, as well as for occupational policies. However, these became insufficient. Stemming from American pressure put onto both nations to reconcile, through few political statements, contemporary Korea and Japan still struggle over their history. This paper aims at analyzing why the expressions of remorse made by the Japanese in the 20th century were insufficient for the Korean side.

Keywords: Japan, Korea, reconciliation, remorse, apology

INTRODUCTION¹

Despite developed economic cooperation² between Japan and the Republic of Korea, historical issues of memory are of particular importance in bilateral relations. Japan is assumed to have apologized to Korea for the crimes committed during the period of occupation of the peninsula. Japanese post-war political leaders are considered to have the moral responsibility for the pre-war policy, although they didn't participate in it³. Notwithstanding the time lapse, Koreans believe that Japan should atone for their actions, or at least adopt a conciliatory or submissive attitude toward their country. Such actions, aiming at a perfect apology, seem impossible, firstly because of the large amount of time since the events,⁴ for which apologies are made, as well as because of the generational change that took place. Therefore, this article discusses the theoretical aspects of the use of the apology in foreign policy and in the domestic policy of conflicting countries, taking as an example the difficult Japanese-Korean relations resulting from the history of the two nations.

Japan incorporated the Korean Peninsula in 1910. During the thirty-five years of Japanese occupation of Korea, we can distinguish three phases of occupation falling successively between 1910 and 1919, 1919 and 1937, and the final phase until the end of World War II on August 15, 1945. The main purpose of the occupation of the Korean peninsula was to exploit its natural deposits, which helped Japan's economy 'get back on its feet' after a period of deflation caused by military action against China and then Russia. One of the most tragic cases of occupational policy happened in Jaem-ri, located south of Seoul. Sources say that at least 29 people were murdered on April 15, 1919 in a Protestant church⁵. The victims were confined to a building under which a fire was set, while shots were fired at those trapped⁶. Then 317 houses in nearby villages were burned⁷. The aim of these actions was retaliation for the independence movement, which began on March 1. However, this event is not the most frequently mentioned in the political debate, since the most vivid issues, such as 'comfort

¹ In this article, the transliteration follows conventions widely adopted in academic and journalistic discourse. Korean names appear in the traditional order (family name followed by given name), and this practice has also been applied consistently to Japanese names.

² Korea was the 3rd export partner in Japan, and Japan was the 4th for Korea. See: *Statista*, at <https://www.statista.com/>, 5 XII 2024.

³ Lee Chong-sik, "Japanese-Korean Relations in Perspective," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1962/1963), p. 321.

⁴ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies for World War II*, New York 2006, p. 16. The question of timing is also mentioned by M. Kula, *Miedzy przeszłością a przyszłością. O pamięci, zapominaniu i przewidywaniu*, Poznań 2004, p. 150.

⁵ G.N. Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings: South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century*, Oakland 2012, p. 45.

⁶ *Jeam-ri Massacre*, at <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/jeam-ri-massacre/agEYL23PS76dlQ>, 5 XII 2024.

⁷ G.N. Katsiaficas, *Asia's...*

women⁸, as well as the suppression of the abovementioned independence movement are the main axis of the debate on the apology. Therefore, this article aims at analyzing what kind of apologies matter in foreign policy making. Although in 1998 the “Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration: A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-First Century”⁹ was announced by Korean President Kim Dae-jung and Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō, the reconciliation didn’t happen and acceptance by the Korean side for the *recognition of history* which came together with *appreciation for it*, was quickly overturned by subsequent politicians and the Korean people.¹⁰ When Prime Minister Abe Shinzō made his statement on the 70th anniversary, he emphasized that Japan *must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with that war, be predestined to apologize*.¹¹ It became obvious that there wouldn’t be any stronger apologies than those made by the politicians who were the witnesses of the occupational and war history. In late 2015, *The Japan-South Korea ‘Comfort Women’ Agreement* was announced (and shelved in 2019). At the same time, the witnesses of the historical events, as well as those who made the statement expressing remorse, passed away, or their age oscillates around 100 years old. With the upcoming 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, a deeper apology from the Japanese side is unlikely. Therefore, this paper tries to precisely identify what the key circumstances and drivers of reconciliation by apology/ remorse are, and what makes people vulnerable or resistant to accept apology. Moreover, it attempts to show what is/was the role of external factors and actors (e.g. US engagement in Asia in general and in Japan and South Korea in particular) in making and accepting the apologies. The author tracks the Japanese method of official apologies towards Korea in the 20th century, as in the moment when the witnesses of history were still alive and in power, and why is it considered insufficient.

APOLOGIES AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Derived from Greek, *apologia* refers to the art of oratory which in everyday use can also mean to justify or apologize. In this article I focus on apology, defined in social science as mortification¹² or *mea culpa*¹³, characterized by Jane W. Yamazaki as a sincere

⁸ Mostly Asians, including Koreans women, forced during the Japanese militarism period on the Asian continent to perform sexual services in brothels for the Japanese military.

⁹ “1998 Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration: A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-first Century,” *MOFA Japan*, at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/joint9810.html>, 5 XII 2024.

¹⁰ “Report of the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century,” *The Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century*, 6 VIII 2015, pp. 41-42.

¹¹ S. Abe, “Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe,” *Asia-Pacific Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2015), pp. 104-105.

¹² W.L. Benoit, “Sears’ Repair of Its Auto Service Image: Image Restoration Discourse in the Corporate Sector,” *Communication Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1-2 (1995), p. 92.

¹³ See: N. Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*, Stanford 1991.

apology¹⁴. Ideally, they should bring both: resentment for the acts committed as well as reconciliation.

The issue of apologizing for past crimes was not addressed in Japan until the 19th century. In 1872, an American official, Major A. G. Warfield, working for the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs in Hokkaidō got drunk and trashed the house where he lived, injuring two men employed there and shooting five hunting dogs belonging to the leader of the local Ainu people¹⁵. Concerned about protests, U.S. authorities ordered him to deliver a written apology to the Japanese government. This apology by an individual to the state became the first example of an apology to the nation in Japanese history. Nowadays, individual apologies by particular political actors for their own misdeeds are treated as *image restoration*¹⁶.

The first to focus on apology in the context of social ritual was Erving Goffman, who considered it a corrective strategy, only effective if the party admitting wrongdoing divides its own position into two parts: the one that is guilty of the offense and the one that distances itself from the act and confirms the rationale and expectations of the wronged party¹⁷. At the same time, he claimed that an apology requires a response, a comment from the side being apologized to, and the completion of the apology process takes place when both sides are satisfied. However, this is not a condition of Japanese-Korean quarrels over historical memory, where the issue of history returns, despite the moments that represented a compromise¹⁸. It can be caused by the fact that the political apology is much more complicated than the interpersonal apology and is likely to generate significant amounts of controversy, since a complication is that they are expected for events that occurred long ago, and current governments may not be able to sincerely admit fault as a result¹⁹.

The apology is an event that neither party can change – an accomplished fact – and the only question we can look to for answers is what prompted the aggressor party to make one²⁰. At the same time, they should remain unchanged and be the starting point for further joint activities²¹. Thus, apologetics is, first of all, a sensitive indicator of the moral orientation of the members (and not only) of a given community, as well as being a kind of barometer, while registering tensions and displacements in the system of both public and personal beliefs²². The apology as a barometer of tension and displacement can be applied to Japanese-Korean relations, where it is not the fact of the apology itself

¹⁴ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 2.

¹⁵ A. Dudden, *Troubled Apologies among Japan, Korea and the United States*, New York 2008, p. 31.

¹⁶ W.L. Benoit, "Sears' Repair...", p. 81.

¹⁷ E. Goffman, *Relations in Public*, New York 1971, p. 113.

¹⁸ As the example serves the case of signed in 1998 *Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration*.

¹⁹ J. Schaafsma, M. Zoodmsa, T. Sagherian-Dickey, T. Friedrich, "These Are Not Just Words: A Cross-national Comparative Study of the Content of Political Apologies," *International Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2001), p. 2.

²⁰ N. Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa...*, p. 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

that is important, but the emotions associated with it and the lack of acceptance from parts of society.

The lack of sincerity, which is the main reason for the Korean side's failure to accept the confession of guilt, can be assessed, among other things, by analyzing the content of the apology offered by linguists. According to linguist Jenny Thomas, a speech model aimed at apologizing to the other party can be characterized. It includes the *prepositional act*, *preparatory condition*, *sincerity condition* and *essential condition*²³. Translating these conditions into the example of Japanese-Korean relations using as a case study the occupation of the peninsula, a proper apology from the Japanese government to the Korean government should be as follows:

1. *prepositional act* – Japan (government) regrets that it occupied Korean territory during a specific time period
2. *preparatory condition* – Japan (government) believes that the occupation of Korean territory was not in the interest of the Korean people
3. *sincerity condition* – Japan (government) regrets seizing Korean territory in a specific time frame
4. *essential condition* – In the words 'We apologize for the occupation of your country' Japan (government) apologizes to Korea.

At the same time, the person who apologizes is important. In the case of state action, modern politicians are not responsible for decisions made 100 years ago, just as individual members of the Japanese nation are not responsible for the decisions of politicians who contributed to the occupation of the Korean peninsula in the past. Therefore, for an official apology, it also needs the *felicity condition*²⁴, which, in its assumptions, requires a statement to be made by a person of appropriate authority and/or under appropriate circumstances²⁵.

Japan functions in international opinion as an extremely humble state²⁶, which is not conducive to understanding the demands for a sincere apology from its side. In addition, the South Korean public, likewise, says it most values politeness in the Japanese, although the number of Koreans claiming so has been declining year after year, and from 73.5% in 2018, less than 50% expressed such an opinion in 2023²⁷. However, it is

²³ J. Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics*, London 1995, p. 99.

²⁴ According to the relevance condition (J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford 1962, pp. 14-15) first, there must be a standard procedure that produces standard results, and the circumstances and persons must be appropriate. Second, this procedure must be done correctly and the circumstances and the person making the statement should harmonize. In addition, it is often required that the persons making the apology have the necessary thoughts, feelings and intentions to achieve the goal, and if secondary behavior is required, subsequent persons must also adopt this attitude. See: J. Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction...*, p. 37.

²⁵ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 8.

²⁶ N. Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa...*, p. 37.

²⁷ "Yoi Inshō-o motte iru ryū" (Reasons for Having a Good Reputation), in *Dai rokkai Nikkan kyōdō Yoronchōsa. Nikkan Yoron Hikaku kekka* (6th Japan-Korea Public Opinion Survey: Results of the Japan-Korea Public Opinion Comparison), The Genron NPO, East Asia Institute, 2018, at <http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/6941.html>, 5 XII 2024, p. 5; "Yoi Inshō-o motte iru ryū"

important to pay attention to the so-called *apology to maintain your well-being*²⁸, characteristic of Japanese culture, which is not necessarily an apology aimed at obtaining forgiveness, but only the cultural universality of apologies, also used when the person expressing remorse is not at fault²⁹. In addition, there is a widespread belief in Japan that it is more important who speaks, not what they say³⁰. This reveals the role of individual politicians who choose to apologize for historical events or downplay such a necessity. The use of apologies by individual political actors being their foreign policy is not without significance. In view of the above, the next section will treat apology as a tool used by politicians as actors on the political stage.

OFFICIAL APOLOGIES AS THE POLICY MAKING

Interest groups representing or sympathizing with the victims consider an official apology from the perpetrator as the primary goal. However, politicians have often incorporated the apology into their own rhetoric, betting on incorporating official regret for the past to build their own state's position. In the 1990s, political leaders learned to mold apologies in ways that the international community perceived as inappropriate³¹. Japan has become a special case, striving to create a 'normal'³² state, namely, independent of US military protection of its own territory. At the same time, during the period of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in 1995, Japan prompted world opinion with a continuous wave of apologies, for its actions towards Asia during the war, but the official admission of guilt became intertwined with the realization of national interest³³. Japan, despite different expressions of regret for the acts committed, remains overshadowed by 'historical problems' which have become tools in the hands of politicians rather than considerations of the region's history³⁴.

For an apology to be effective, in addition to the conditions for an effective apology identified by Jenny Thomas above, a condition of no 'loss of face' is also necessary

(Reasons for Having a Good Reputation), in *Dai juuikkai Nikkan kyōdō Yoronchōsa. Nikkan Yoron Hikaku kekka* (11th Japan-Korea Public Opinion Survey: Results of the Japan-Korea public opinion comparison), The Genron NPO, East Asia Institute, 2023, at <https://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/16656-2.html>, 5 XII 2024.

²⁸ See: M. Kotani, "A Discourse Analytic Approach to the Study of Japanese Apology: The 'Feel-Good' Apology as a Cultural Category," in N. Sugimoto (ed.), *Japanese Apology Across Disciplines*, New York 1999.

²⁹ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³¹ A. Dudden, *Troubled Apologies...*, p. 33.

³² Japanese referred to these strivings as state-building, which is *nomāru*, a term adopted from the English word *normal*.

³³ A. Dudden, *Troubled Apologies...*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

for politicians. This is particularly relevant from the perspective of *politeness theory*³⁵, which assumes that an apology minimizes the damage to one's image that may result if one does not make it. Meanwhile, in the case of Japan, it is important to consider the image the country has developed of itself based on its post-war cooperation with the United States. Adapting to the assumptions of U.S. occupation policy, it developed a world image as a victim of World War II, especially in the context of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki³⁶. Likewise, friendly relations between Japan and the United States contributed to the marginalization of the Korean perspective during the negotiation of a treaty between Japan and the Republic of Korea in the first half of the 1960s. Consequently, Japan is not so concerned about the 'loss of face' associated with the warfare (and occupation) of the first half of the 20th century, while there is concern about 'losing face' as a regional power, a trusted partner of the US. Indeed, an official apology could be seen as a *status degradation ceremony*.³⁷

On the Korean side, on the other hand, there is also a fear of 'losing face' in front of voters, as well as the international community, if Korea were to be portrayed as an economically powerful country that is incapable of taking care of its own interests of national pride and 'historical justice,' especially in the context of being a victim of Japanese imperialism, the actions of World War II and the Korean War (1950-1953). Highlighting the events of the past by Korean politicians can help generate a gain in terms of realizing the creation of an economically powerful state in the 21st century, despite the accumulated difficulties in the not-so-distant history. Jane Yamazaki, in relation to the theory of status degradation, states that for individual nation-states, the apology ceremony is the communication work of nations, in which the public identity of the state is transformed into something that is perceived as inferior in the eyes of the world, and therefore, the declining status of the state affects both citizens and the international arena³⁸. At the same time, among Japanese scholars, the issue of apology coincides with the discussion of responsibility for World War II (*sensō sekinin*) and specific themes raised internationally, including the issue of 'comfort women'³⁹.

In the case of Japan and Korea, there is no jointly developed consensus on the past. Therefore, the only way to satisfy the citizens of each country is through a policy of remembrance conducted in accordance with the expectations of the nation in question. Care is then shown to prevent internal conflicts, while escalating those at the international level. This is done, among other things, thanks to the unquestionable mythologization of the events related to foreign policy towards a specific

³⁵ See: J. Holmes, "Apologies in New Zealand English," *Language in Society*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1990), pp. 155-199.

³⁶ Więcej: O. Barbasiewicz, *Pomniki i miejsca Pamięci w relacjach międzynarodowych. Wpływ pamięci na stosunki japońsko-amerykańskie z perspektywy Japonii*, Warszawa 2016.

³⁷ See: H. Garfinkel, "Conditions of successful degradation ceremonies," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, no. 5 (1956), pp. 420-424.

³⁸ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

country⁴⁰. In the case of South Korea, the period of loss of sovereignty and the role Japan had in it have grown into a myth. For the Japanese, on the other hand, pacifism has become a myth, and a sense of victimhood that, while related to the post-war period, prevents them from fully empathizing with their peninsula neighbors. Therefore, it can be stated that myths of each nations disable them from making sufficient reconciliation. Jennifer Lind, an American political scientist, posits that despite the Japanese public's opposition to Japanese government policies in which not a shred of remorse was evident, the Japanese position was not related to the crimes committed by Japanese troops during the war, but only to a pervasive sense of victimization of the nation, stemming from the experience of the American attack on Japanese cities⁴¹. Likewise, in order to maintain public support, the Japanese government supports historical narratives that are appropriate from its point of view⁴². Thus, admitting to the crimes committed shatters the image of a good state, built on myths that constitute its identity.

RELEVANT JAPANESE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS OF APOLOGIZING

As indicated in the previous section of the article, specific decision-makers and stakeholders expressing regret for past events are relevant to the politics of remembrance and the accuracy of the apology expressed. At the same time, it is also necessary to moderate emotionally and judge the validity of an apology by acts that are repeated⁴³. Willy Brandt's gesture in Warsaw in front of the Monument to Ghetto Heroes in 1970 is considered one of the most evocative apologies for the Korean politicians and media. Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se used this gesture by Brandt as an example for Japanese Prime Minister Abe in the context of the lack of apology to the 'comfort women'⁴⁴. Even though this gesture is mentioned by the Korean policymakers or media, it has to be noted that it is rather unknown for Poles, due to its censorship by Polish media in 1970⁴⁵, and shouldn't be treated as a successful way of rapprochement amongst Asians.

When many years have passed since the events for which an admission of guilt is expected, the apology is considered to be issued by the notable broadcasters of the statement in which they ask for forgiveness. In the case of Japan, these are the emperor,

⁴⁰ J. Friedman, "Myth, History, and Political Identity," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1992), p. 206.

⁴¹ J. Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*, Ithaca-London 2008, p. 37.

⁴² J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 14.

⁴³ N. Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa...*, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁴ More about the usage of Polish-German reconciliation see in: O. Barbasiewicz, "Die deutsch-polnische Annäherung als Vorbild für die japanisch-koreanischen Beziehungen.," in: *(Un) versöhnt? Gedanken über die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen nach 1945*, herausgegeben von T. Skonieczny, Wrocław 2019, pp. 131-132,

⁴⁵ A. Kiszteńska-Węgrzynska, „Wizyta Willy'ego Brandta w Polsce w dniach 6-8 grudnia 1970 roku w świetle ówczesnej prasy polskiej,” *Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki/Deutsch-Polnisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 17 (2009), p. 36.

prime minister and parliament. Yet there are no clear links between the statements of these political actors and the attitude of the Japanese nation. Nevertheless, it is posited that the value of a state apology is measured by its representational quality⁴⁶. In the case of the sincerity condition, it is difficult to see how a person expressing remorse can feel regret, not being the one who committed the crime to which he admits and for which he apologizes. Sincerity is very difficult to study from the perspective of social science methodology, even if it is the most desired by the nation and political actors in Korea. In recent research, it was the Prime Minister and Government of Japan who were analyzed to have the biggest impact on the acceptance of apologies on the Korean side⁴⁷. Since this paper is not providing the statistical data analysis, the ‘institutional constancy,’ i.e. legal and governmental structures that promote reconciliation between nations, such as the education system, the constitution, rules for granting citizenship or political processes are crucial⁴⁸.

One of the most prominent actors in Japan is the Emperor. Although under the current constitution he has no real power⁴⁹, under the constitution in effect during the war he had unlimited power⁵⁰. Hirohito, in power since 1926, a period largely associated with Japanese military expansion, remained on the throne until 1989. As such, his direct reference to the situation of the Korean people seems particularly relevant, given the ruler’s direct responsibility for warfare as interpreted by the Meiji Constitution of the time. Therefore, this Emperor’s apology deserves a separate interpretation, due to the fact that he was responsible for Japan’s policies until 1945.

For the first time, Hirohito referred to past events involving Japanese-Korean relations during a visit by South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan to Japan in 1984. On September 6th, at a luncheon held at the Imperial Palace, he gave a speech in which he mentioned the geographical proximity of the two countries and the cultural exchanges that have enriched Japan through neighborly relations. He described the unhappy past as brief and *truly regrettable*, expressing the hope that it would not be repeated in the future⁵¹.

This was the latest apology to nations that suffered from military action during World War II⁵². Earlier, back in 1975, during a meeting with President Gerald Ford, Hirohito expressed remorse to the American people, while three years later, he reiterated his regrets to the Chinese chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Deng Xiaoping during his visit to Tokyo.

⁴⁶ N. Field, “War and Apology: Japan, Asia, the Fiftieth, and After,” *Positions*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1997), p. 7.

⁴⁷ R. David, Pui Chuen Tam, “Political Apologies and Their Acceptance: Experimental Evidence from Victims and Perpetrators Nations,” *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 63, no. 1 (2024), p. 283.

⁴⁸ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ “The Constitution of Japan,” *Prime Minister Of Japan and His Cabinet*, at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html, 5 XII 2024.

⁵⁰ G. Górski, “Konstytucja Cesarstwa Japonii z 1889 roku,” *Roczniki Nauk Prawnych*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2019), p. 45.

⁵¹ J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 141.

⁵² C. Haberman, “Hirohito Soothes Korean President,” *The New York Times*, 7 IX 1984, p. 1.

At the beginning of his reign, Hirohito's son Akihito addressed the South Korean president, Roh Tae-woo, during his visit to Japan. In a speech delivered on May 24, 1990; he repeated the pattern adopted by his father; apologizing for the *unhappy past*, but also referring to the words suggested by Americans in the era of the establishment of relations between post-war Japan and the Republic of Korea, which later became the key phrase for the Japanese apology⁵³. Akihito also cited personal thoughts, but 12 years later Koreans still pointed out the need for a correct apology, without which the Japanese emperor would not be invited to Korea⁵⁴. No less significant are the apologies made by Japanese politicians. The first official apology was uttered by Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburō at Seoul Airport in 1965, as a result of an ongoing U.S. policy to normalize relations between the two countries. Shiina stated that Japan should think about the *unfortunate* period amidst the long history of Japan-Korea relations and establish forward-looking and friendly relations, filled with respect and remembrance of the history linking both countries⁵⁵. By subjecting this statement to a deeper analysis, only some of the conditions for a proper apology were observed: the specific recipient of the message – the Korean people – was indicated, but the subsequent components on the expression of regret and the accuracy of the apology were not fulfilled. It should be noted that Shiina did not make any of the constituent factors for expressing regret. In fact, he did not express regret, but only stated that it was necessary to reflect on the events of the *unfortunate period*, without specifying what he was referring to. There were also no expressions such as *I apologize* (e.g., Jap. *shazai*) but only *deep regret*. Serving as a foreign minister, he apologized on his own behalf and not on behalf of the nation. Moreover, it is difficult to analyze gestures and actions that might support or contradict the statement, in the specific context of the U.S. pressure⁵⁶, arising from the need to accelerate the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea.

In the early 1980s, a crisis over the content of history textbooks in Japanese schools⁵⁷ led to a crisis in Japanese-Korean relations. In this regard, the head of the government's office, Miyazawa Kiichi, on August 26, 1982 issued a statement stating that *the Japanese Government and the Japanese people are deeply aware of the fact that acts by our country in the past caused tremendous suffering and damage to the peoples of Asian countries, including the Republic of Korea (ROK) (...), and have followed the path of a pacifist state with*

⁵³ O. Barbasiewicz, "How Much Does the Reconciliation Matter?: The Japanese-American Alliance in the Context of Regional Stabilization in East Asia," in O. Barbasiewicz (ed), *Postwar Reconciliation in Central Europe and East Asia: The Case of Polish-German and Korean-Japanese Relations*, Berlin 2018, p. 109.

⁵⁴ Ser Myo-ja, "Lee Tells Japanese Emperor to Apologize," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 14 VIII 2014, at <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2012/08/14/politics/Lee-tells-japanese-emperor-to-apologize/2957923.html>, 5 XII 2024.

⁵⁵ A. Dudden, *Troubled Apologies...*, p. 44.

⁵⁶ O. Barbasiewicz, "Aiming at Reconciliation. Political Leaders, Post-war Lieux de Mémoire, and the Memory Work (Travail de Mémoire) in the Context of the Alliance Between Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea," *Hemispheres*, vol. 32 (2017), p. 6.

⁵⁷ See more about the crisis: M. Pletnia, *Pamięć zbiorowa o wojnie na Pacyfiku w powojennej Japonii*, Kraków 2019.

remorse and determination that such acts must never be repeated. Japan has recognized, in the Japan-ROK Joint Communiqué of 1965, that the 'past relations are regrettable, and Japan feels deep remorse,' (...) These statements confirm Japan's remorse and determination which I stated above and this recognition has not changed at all to this day.⁵⁸ Virtually every condition of accuracy was met in this statement, except for the subsequent actions of the government, which did not resolve the disputes over textbooks but consistently fueled them⁵⁹. Miyazawa was an authority figure who spoke out on behalf of himself, the government and the Japanese people. However, despite the designation of a specific nation (Korea and China), the offense was not specified, and the expression of regret was done by repeating the content of previous treaties, so the word sorry was replaced by the information that Japan feels 'deep remorse.' Significantly, Miyazawa pointed out that Japanese actions in East Asia have contributed to the harm of the Korean people.

In 1985 Nakasone Yasuhiro made a statement at the United Nations. Speaking of Japan's past, he mentioned the forty nations against which Japan fought during the war⁶⁰. Another confession by the prime minister – this time by Takeshita Noboru – delivered in Japan's parliament in 1989 was directed mainly at North Korea (mentioning this name for the first time)⁶¹. They were characterized by the first-ever use of so many words expressing remorse for past offenses: *kutsuu*, meaning suffering (caused by Japan's actions), regret for the acts committed (*hansei*), regret and remorse (*ikan*)⁶². The speech can be considered the most successful apology performed by the Japanese prime minister, as he firstly pointed to a specific nation (Korean – although the apology was prompted by the need to address North Koreans). In addition, he expressed regret for the past fact in two ways and stated that Japan had acted to the detriment of the Korean people. The authority of the speaker was preserved, as well as the apology on behalf of the government and Japanese citizens.

Addressing the Koreans directly with the precise naming of the offense took place in 1990, when Foreign Minister Nakayama Tarō issued the regret in the House of Representatives (Lower House) with the words: *I believe that honestly as a government we should make every effort to solve the problem of the treatment of Koreans residing in Japan and being victims of a nuclear attack or the return to the homeland of Koreans displaced to Sakhalin (...)*.⁶³ The next prime minister who referred to Japan's wartime past was Hosokawa Morihiro. In 1993, he made several references to Japanese militarism in his

⁵⁸ "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa on History Textbooks," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 26 VIII 1982, at https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page25e_000351.html, 13 V 2019.

⁵⁹ See more: O. Barbasiewicz, "Pamięć o II wojnie światowej w działaniach Związku Pracowników Oświaty Japonii (Nihon Kyōshokuin Kumiai) w kontekście relacji japońsko-amerykańskich," *Studia Polityczne*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2018), pp. 31-44.

⁶⁰ R. Drifte, *Japan's Quest for a Permanent Security-Council Seat: A Matter of Pride or Justice*, London 2000, pp. 48-49.

⁶¹ Kim Hong Nack, "Japan's Relations with North Korea," *Current History*, vol. 90, no. 555 (1991), p. 165.

⁶² Vocabulary selection by J.W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies...*, p. 142.

⁶³ "Committee on Foreign Affairs," *House of Representatives*, 18 IV 1990, at <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/118/0110/11804180110003.pdf>, 5 XII 2024.

statements and speeches. During the 127th session of parliament, he expressed regret and apologized for the occupation of other countries' territories on behalf of the Japanese government.⁶⁴ In the same time the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yōhei Kōno, made a statement directed towards 'comfort women,' however in the future research this act was called 'insufficient and insincere.'⁶⁵

The person who made the greatest contribution to satisfying Korean public opinion was Murayama Tomiichi, a Japanese prime minister, who was the first Social Democrat to hold this important office. He made his meaningful statement during the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in the region and the Japanese surrender. It is considered *the most unambiguous expression of Japan's contrition since World War II*.⁶⁶ Murayama did not mention the Korean nation and referred to all the countries that were the victims of Japanese policy expressing *deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology*.⁶⁷ His activity throughout his post-office career, such as supporting Korean 'comfort women' by visits in the Korean National Assembly for their pictures' exhibition⁶⁸, showed Murayama's activity almost 20 years after making the significant apology and reassured the recipients of the message of its sincerity. Even though after leaving office Japanese politicians began the practice of using apologies as a way to build their own image⁶⁹, the activity of Murayama is not considered a fake interest in the victims' situation.

When analyzing official regrets from Japan, we cannot forget those expressed by representatives of Japanese society, often ordinary people not affiliated with any political groups. Yet the Nobel Peace Prize awarded in October 2024 to the Japanese social organization, Nihon Hidankyō, highlights the voice of the public matters in creating international policy.

One example of an apology is by Japanese Christians who decided to take responsibility in the 1960s as representatives of the Japanese people for the massacre that took place in Jeam-ri and to collect money to rebuild the church that was destroyed at the time⁷⁰.

In 2001, 14 Japanese people watched a play entitled *Ah! Jeam-ri* at Moonyae Hall in Seoul. Soon after, they traveled with the play's producer to the village to apologize for

⁶⁴ "Speech by Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro, 23.08.1993," *Sekai to Nihon* (World and Japan), at <http://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/pm/19930823.SWJ.html>, 5 XII 2024.

⁶⁵ S. Kuki, "The Burden of History: The Issue of 'Comfort Women' and What Japan Must Do To Move Forward," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 1 (2013), p. 248.

⁶⁶ K. Togo, "The Historical Role and Future Implications of the Murayama Statement: A View from Japan," in K. Togo (ed.), *Japan and Reconciliation in Post-war Asia: The Murayama Statement and Its Implications*, New York 2013, p. 2.

⁶⁷ "Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama 'On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End' (15 August 1995)," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html>, 5 XII 2024.

⁶⁸ Gu Gyo-hyeong, "I Am Speechless,' Murayama Lets Out a Stream of Sighs after Viewing the Comfort Women Exhibition," *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 II 2014, at https://english.khan.co.kr/khan_art_view.html?artid=201402121405237&code=710100, 13 X 2024.

⁶⁹ A. Dudden, *Troubled Apologies...*

⁷⁰ Á. Duró, "Historical Counter-Narratives: Japanese Christians' Advocacy for South Korean Atomic Bomb Victims," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2020), p. 294.

the crime committed by Japanese occupation authorities. The play's author commented to Korean press, that even if those visitors were a minority in Japanese society, there is a hope that their voices will be heard so that the social atmosphere of Japan can change⁷¹.

A philosophy professor at Tokyo's Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic University, Endo Doru is another Japanese citizen who has decided to apologize to the victims of Japanese policies during the occupation and World War II. Endo arrived in Seoul during the October 2016 protests in front of the Japanese embassy. He bowed to each of the protesting 'comfort women' and said: *I am Japanese... I am sorry that Japan did countless wrongdoings in the past. I have come to apologize as a Japanese person*⁷². Endo adopted an attitude similar to that of Willy Brandt in Warsaw in 1970, kneeling before the victims. The man then went to the village of Jeam-ri.

On the 100th anniversary of the independence movement, 17 Christians from Japan paid tribute to the murdered Koreans at a church in Jeam-ri. Pastor Oyama Reiji, who led the group, prayed with the words: *Lord, this church is where the worst case was committed by Japanese officials during the colonial period*.⁷³ The group was carrying banners in Korean, which said *We deeply apologize for Japan's colonization of Korea. We'll keep apologizing until you say 'Now that's enough'*.⁷⁴ This statement shows an awareness of the Korean people's expectation of a continuous apology.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article the author made an attempt to show the apologies by specific stakeholders in the 20th century. This article made an attempted to analyze what kind of apologies matter in foreign policy making, tracking the Japanese method of official apologies towards Korea from the very first moments of Korean independence until the end of the 20th century, when it seemed that the process of reconciliation, together with the *Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration* was intended to settle down. However, from the beginning of the 21st century struggles over the past started to increase, and everything done before seemed insufficient.

Although the longest serving Prime Minister Abe Shinzō made an attempt to repay for the atrocities towards 'comfort women,' his pivot towards Japanese citizens who weren't the targets of Japanese post-war policy did not bring the settlement of historical disputes between Japan and Korea. Therefore, the selected statements issued in the period of 50 years after the war ended were chosen to analysis, how to make saying 'sorry'

⁷¹ "Memorial Service for Jeam-ri Massacre on Thursday," *The Chosunilbo*, 28 II 2001, at http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2001/02/28/2001022861419.html, 5 XII 2024.

⁷² "Elderly Japanese Man Begg for Forgiveness from Sex Slave Victims," *allkpop*, at <https://www.allkpop.com/article/2016/10/elderly-japanese-man-begs-for-forgiveness-from-sex-slave-victims>, 5 XII 2024.

⁷³ "South Korea: Japanese Christians Apologise for a Massacre 100 Years Ago," *asianews*, at <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/South-Korea:-Japanese-Christians-apologise-for-a-massacre-100-years-ago-46391.html>, 5 XII 2024.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

be useful in shaping international relations. Since none of the statements in the 20th century fulfilled all of the conditions leading to the successful expression of regret – namely admitting that there was the occupation of the Korean territory which was not in the interest of the Korean nation, also that there was not a direct and straight apology to the Koreans, the 21st century's historical struggle, lack of acceptance by the Korean nation and the Japanese steps towards compensation (financial) among others for the suffering of 'comfort women' – led to ongoing animosities between both nations.

It could be the case that the apologies in Japanese political culture derive from the Western way of shaping relations with the other country. After the war Japan focused on rebuilding the country based on the 'peaceful' constitution and the feeling called *hi-gaisha ishiki* (Japanese term translated as the 'awareness of being the victim') connected to dropping two atomic bombs by Americans onto the Japanese territory, developed among the Japanese. During the process of re-establishing Japanese-Korean relations, under American pressure, attempts to apologize to Korea for the occupation have started. However, the lack of sincerity cited by the apologized party has become a bone of contention and the basis for claims of a sincere apology. Although scholars of the subject have pointed out the conditions that must be fulfilled to achieve satisfactory reconciliation, most policy-makers' speeches have failed to fulfill them. It is worth noting, however, the role of individual Japanese citizens or groups that, as a society, have demonstrated deep expressions of grief. For further consideration, it is worth turning to the sides of typically Asian apologies in business situations. These derive from the standards practiced in East Asia, and focus on expressing the sorrow for what happened in a very *tragic and dramatic* way, which *makes it easier for Japanese listeners to forgive*⁷⁵. Meanwhile in policy-making, the Western patterns, such as Willy Brandt's bent knee in Warsaw, gets repeated in Korean political statements without the guarantee that this way of saying sorry will be satisfying for the Korean audience, as well as without knowing the Polish social and political reactions towards it.

Taking this under consideration, it is worth analyzing in the future studies whether people from these Asian countries, familiar with the very expressing way of apologizing in a business culture, should attempt to use this way in expressing sorrow for their historical past, gaining forgiveness from the apologetic site. Those were Japanese, who gave the background of business culture to Koreans⁷⁶. Therefore, the common patterns of admitting guilt before even checking the facts, and official statements expressing sorrow are those to which Japanese are familiar with and which are commonly used when an accident or huge problem occurs, causing harm to the customers or beneficiaries. These standards are far from the Western way of expressing regret for committed mistakes in business. We can assume that business culture, so important for both nations, can bring the solutions in accepted expression of remorse on the Korean side.

⁷⁵ P. Kalbermatten, *Schindler Elevators and the Challenges of the Japanese Market*, in: P. Haghirian, P. Gagnon (eds), *Case Studies in Japanese Management*, Singapore 2011, p. 214.

⁷⁶ F.J. Froese, "Korean Management: Quo Vadis?," *Asian Business & Management*, vol. 19 (2020), p. 145.

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